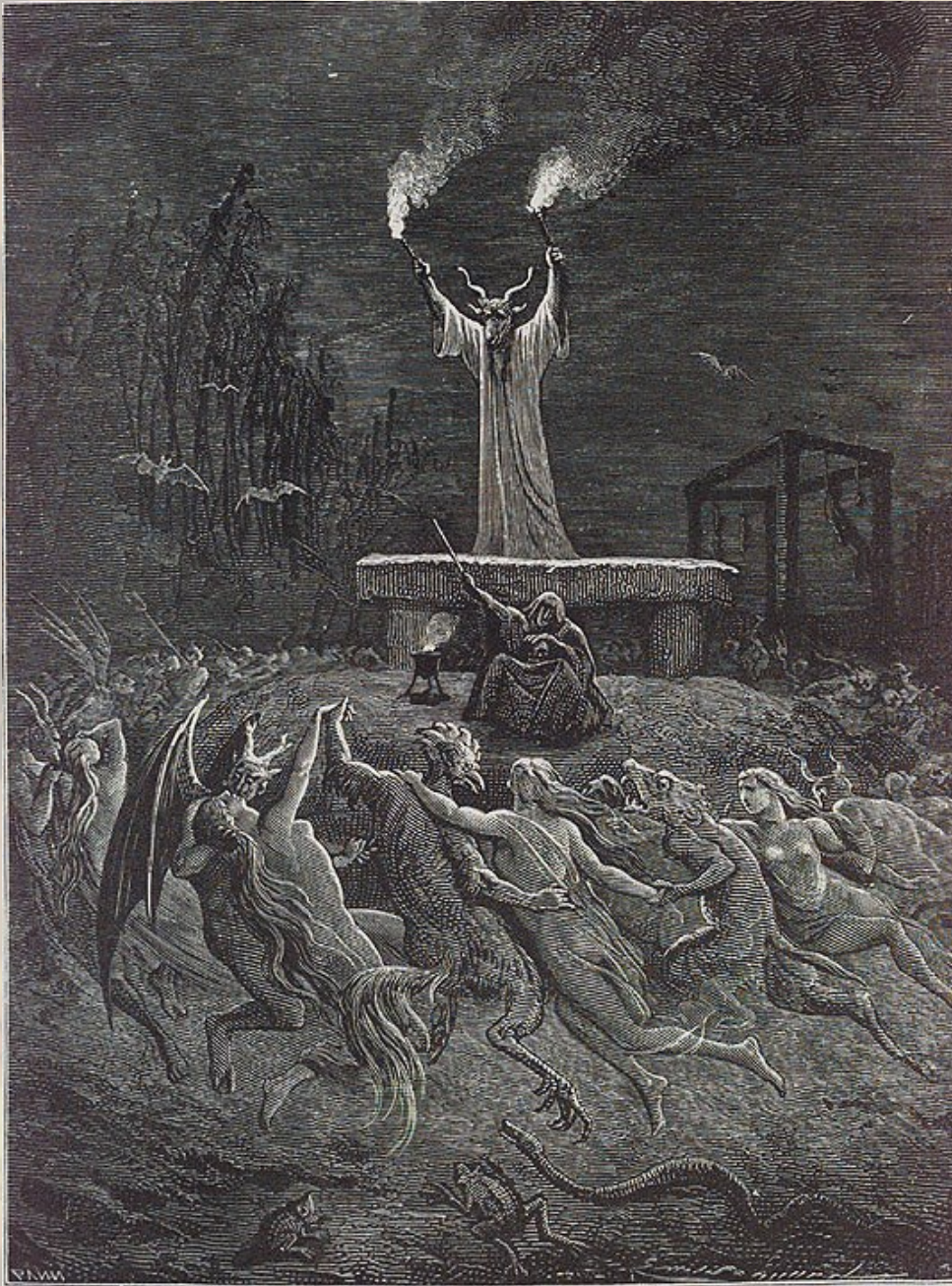


The
Yellow
Book
of Curses

CURSES



What is good in life can be taken away, where there is pleasure there can be pain. The magic of curses is the wizard's corrective rod, their instrument for training through punishments. Some wizard consider the lash of curses to be an unfortunate necessity and apply it sparingly. Others consider curses to be the essential practice of magic and that all other spells are subordinate to the curse. Inasmuch as magic is the pure manifestation of the wizard's will – Curses effectively demonstrate the depth & intensity of their displeasure.

Where some magical disciplines speak to the subject's conception of the self, virtually no other magic is as pure an expression of the caster's intent. Wizards regard the types of curses their contemporaries employ as profoundly indicative of their character. To say nothing of their willingness to employ them. Many wizards forgo this magic altogether, as the power it entails innately tempts them to corruption.

A Neutral Wizard's curses are dispassionate. They don't regard curses as punishments or correctives – rather they see the destructive power of curses as a very practical implement useful in any arena. Creative destruction is the effective ethos behind most neutral curses. (Neutral curses have their damage die improved by two die-types when calculating the damage that they do to inanimate objects)

Curses as correction is the ethical center of the Lawful Wizard's use of this magic. Rarely, a lawful wizard will use a curse to inflict final death or permanent disfigurement. Their preference is to inflict the curse so that a preferable outcome can be reached. It is no great matter, after all, if a curse is lifted through good behavior, it can always be applied again as needed. (The curses of Lawful Wizards have a duration. Damage & effects inflicted by their curses do not heal & cannot be recovered from unless the target of the

spell fulfills a specific requirement. They must be able to actually complete the requirement & they must know what it is. For instance a very minor curse could inflict d4 damage – that will not heal – until the recipient of the curse performs some action – such as apologizing, bowing or returning something that has been stolen, at which point all ill effects are removed.)

Chaotic Wizards imbue their curses with a bit of their own reckless disregard for reason. They have the skill required not only to damage flesh but the mind itself. They can damage & twist the senses just as well as they can harm the body. (Chaotic wizards can choose to inflict the *frightened* condition by increasing the level of their spells by 1 or the *maddened* condition by increasing the level by 2.)

Good Wizards usually have an attitude toward Curses that can be described as troubled. Many good wizards forgo this school of magic altogether but there are a few who see the essential virtue in curses – that they can remove evil from the world. (A good wizard's curses do not inflict damage to living creatures but they deal double damage to wicked people & creatures.)

The Curse is a favorite of the evil wizard. The ability to inflict harm upon enemies is particularly satisfying to such casters, some of whom choose magic purely as a means of accessing these types of spells. They seek the power to hurt others without effort or consequence and they use this magic with practiced cruelty. An evil wizard isn't bound by time or place –their malice is guide enough for the magic to strike their targets unerringly. (Evil wizards can target people with curses regardless of their relative location – so long as they possess a link to the subject – some kind of personal effect or some portion of the target – such as nail clippings or hair. So long as they hold something significant of the target they can direct their curses at that target irrespective of range.)

Curses affect materially existing creatures & beings exclusively. Insubstantial or ephemeral targets may not be successfully targeted by curses as they lack the physiology required to experience punishments.

Soulless creatures and non-living monsters, such as automatons, robots & zombies are considered objects for the purpose of applying damage – they cannot be affected by diseases & mental afflictions but they take damage as objects would.

Death & dismemberment inflicted by curses is *permanent* in the sense that short of miraculous or magical intervention they cannot be reversed. How a limb is lost is up to the caster of the spell's temperament it may wither away, simply fall off or become simply unusable without detaching. These details are designed into a spell as it's created. Decapitation or any other kind of severing that would automatically kill a target counts as the +10 Instant death enhancement. When lawful wizards allow their curses to be lifted body parts that have been disabled become useable again.

Different sorts & flavors of damage can be substituted. Instead of fire a chemical burn could be inflicted – use the enhancement that is closest to your intended effect when building your curse.

The final curse is a commonly used technique – common enough that many wizards know to anticipate the terrible effects & will often dupe proxies into doing their dirty work, thus taking on the curse of a rival.

Fear inflicted by curses generally lingers for a number of hours equal to the spell's level. Characters are entitled to another save vs. the spell after that. If that save fails as well the fear effect remains until sunrise.

Curse: The vigorous application of hostility by a wizard takes many shapes, in its most profane form, the curse simply inflicts harm upon those who have earned the wizard's disdain.

- ❖ Base score – inflicts d4 damage on 1 target
- ❖ Duration – Permanent
 - ★ +1 per additional die of damage
 - ★ +1 per 10' affected – measured in radii of 10' increments
 - ★ +1 for fire effect – burns flammable materials
 - ★ +1 for cold effect – slows living targets
 - ★ +1 for electric effect – arcs to secondary target
 - ★ +1 per size increase of damage dice d4 → d6 → d8 etc...
 - ★ -1 for the curse to inflict no damage
 - ★ +2 to inflict some kind of disfigurement or flaw that reduces parley dice by a step
 - ★ +3 for lingering effect that does not heal naturally & requires magical intervention
 - ★ +2 to inflict blindness or deafness
 - ★ +3 to inflict a disease
 - ★ +5 per limb severed
 - ★ +10 for death
 - ★ +8 for heritable curses – your offspring bear the curse as well.
 - ★ +2 for final curse – you cast this spell in advance, it takes effect on anyone who kills you

Sample Curses – The Yellow Book - *The Yellow Book*, or as it's sometimes called the *Book of Haunts* or the *Book of Terror* is a bizarre & intermittently copied set of curses that revolve around the notion of spreading terror. The original book is of unknown provenance – there aren't many cultural signifiers in the book & the rudimentary writing within it is a strange dialect of Czerwa and hard to interpret even for wizards. The Yellow Book has seen wide circulation & there are many copies in the world – most have been modified & customized during transcription. For the most though the book is a series of images that, when contemplated closely allow a chaotic wizard (and the Yellow Book only works for Chaotic Wizards) to torment a few people in an enclosed area. Often, even wizards with a larger compliment of curse spells will rely on the Yellow Book as the source of their spells of guarding & dissuasion. Spells in the Yellow Book are cast silently & without any motion – they require a careful, intense silence and time. Wizards who use the spells in the Yellow Book tend to be methodical and wicked. They take their time & they are quite content to take their time as they dismantle the targets of their curses.

The Yellow Book presented here is the sample recovered from the Witch Zasimus of Pelican Isle.

The Startling Sound: Simplest of the Yellow Book's curses, the startling sound is a mental curse, a sudden feeling of fear instigated by a terrible, sudden sound that the subject of the spell alone is able to hear. The inability of others to discern the sound only makes the fear that the spell creates all the more intense. The sound itself is imaginary, and it tends to reflect the deep fears of the spell's target. The spell can be cast silently.

Level: 1 **Duration:** Permanent **Casting Time:** 1 Minute

Effects: Inflicts d4 damage & inflicts a fear effect on a target who fails a save.

The Charging Unseen Enemy: This is a broader version of the Startling Sound – it influences everyone within a radius of 20' from the central target location. The startling noise is heard by everyone present, but it is no longer tailored to their inmost fears – rather it sounds, unfailingly, like enemies charging from just around the corner. The spell can be cast silently & without movement.

Level: 3 **Duration:** Permanent **Casting Time:** 3 Minutes

Effects: Deals 1d4 damage & fear in a 20' radius

The Calamitous Cacophony: The shaken subject of the terrible, frightening noise is jolted vigorously, the fear spreads over them like a deep chill that shocks their system. There is a ruinous, jarring feeling of terrible anticipation and this feeling is contagious, it arcs between the target and someone nearby to them. They all feel this jolt, this fear, this terrible anticipation.

Level: 2 **Duration:** Permanent **Casting Time:** 2 Minutes

Effects: Deals 2d4 damage to a target which arcs to the closest living being dealing the same damage

The Hateful Howl: The spell brutally tears through the mind & heart of the target, it ruthlessly shreds their nerves and inflicts a terror that cannot be shaken off. It is a close, horrifying personal revelation that shakes the subject, deeply, as they are forced to confront a bestial internal voice – a demon within themselves that they cannot turn away from.

Level: 4 **Duration:** Permanent **Casting Time:** 4 Minutes

Effects: Deals 4d4 damage to the target & inflicts fear to targets who fail their save vs spells

The Horrid Disfiguring: The final, horrible terror inflicted by the Yellow Book – the subject of this spell is terrorized to the point that they bite off one of their own fingers. The terror built up over the course of the haunting inflicted by the curses within the book take their terrible toll. In terror of revealing themselves, in terror of uttering a noise the subject of the spell force their hand into their mouth to stifle the screams that they cannot contain. In total submission to their own fear they bite off one of their fingers.

Level: 4 **Duration:** Permanent **Casting Time:** 4 Minutes

Effects: Target takes d4 damage & loses one finger if they fail their save vs. spells

The Wicked Haunting: The murderous, brutal cruelty of the wizard is released in a small, confined room. The spell cruelly blinds & maddens everyone within a 10' radius. Darkness falls over the room and in the absence of vision the spell's subjects experience their worst fears, their most terrible imaginings. These are unleashed and the subject's mind is destroyed. This spell can be cast without drawing any attention.

Level: 3 **Duration:** Permanent **Casting Time:** 3 Minutes

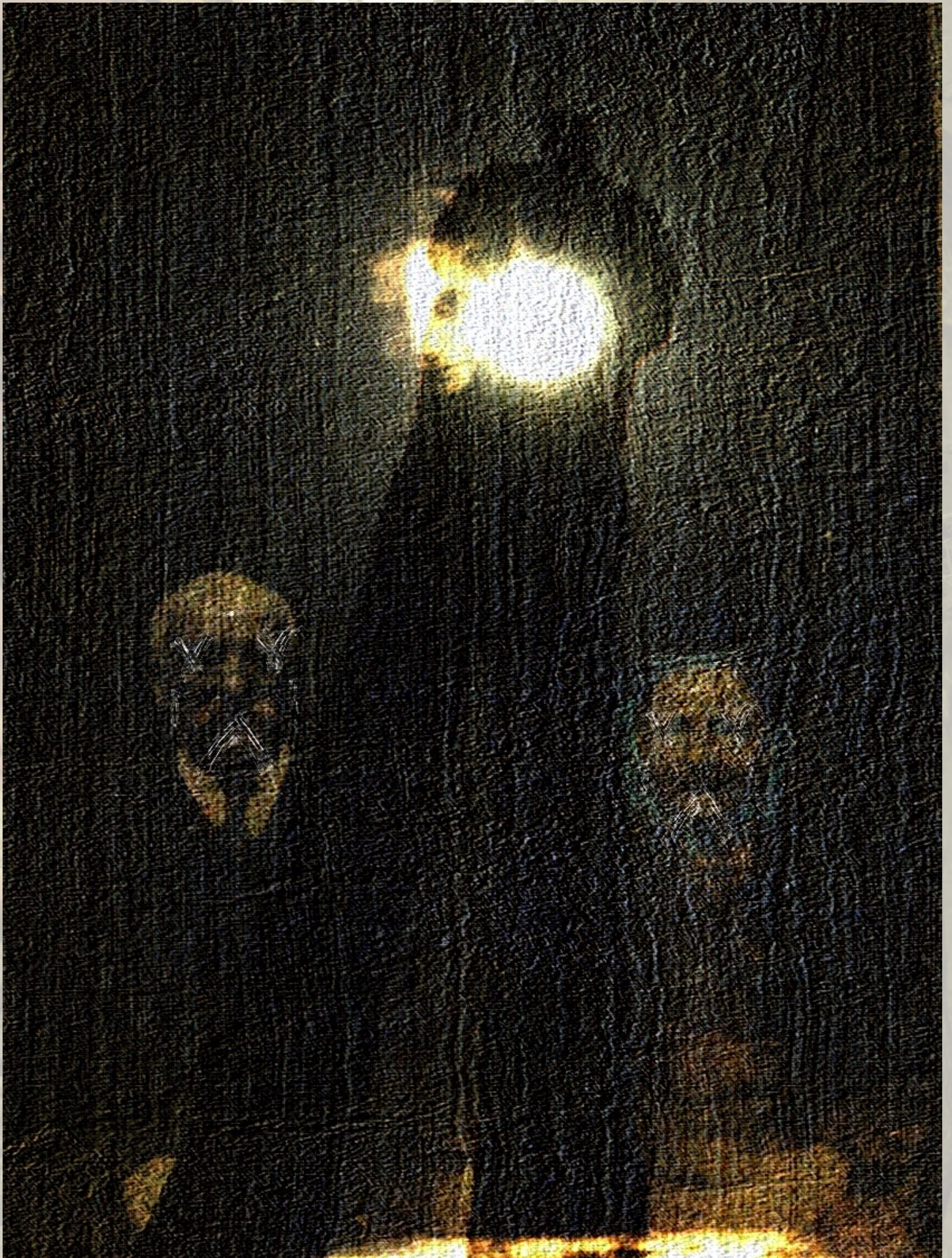
Effects: The spell inflicts madness & blindness on everyone within a 10' radius who fails their save vs. spells

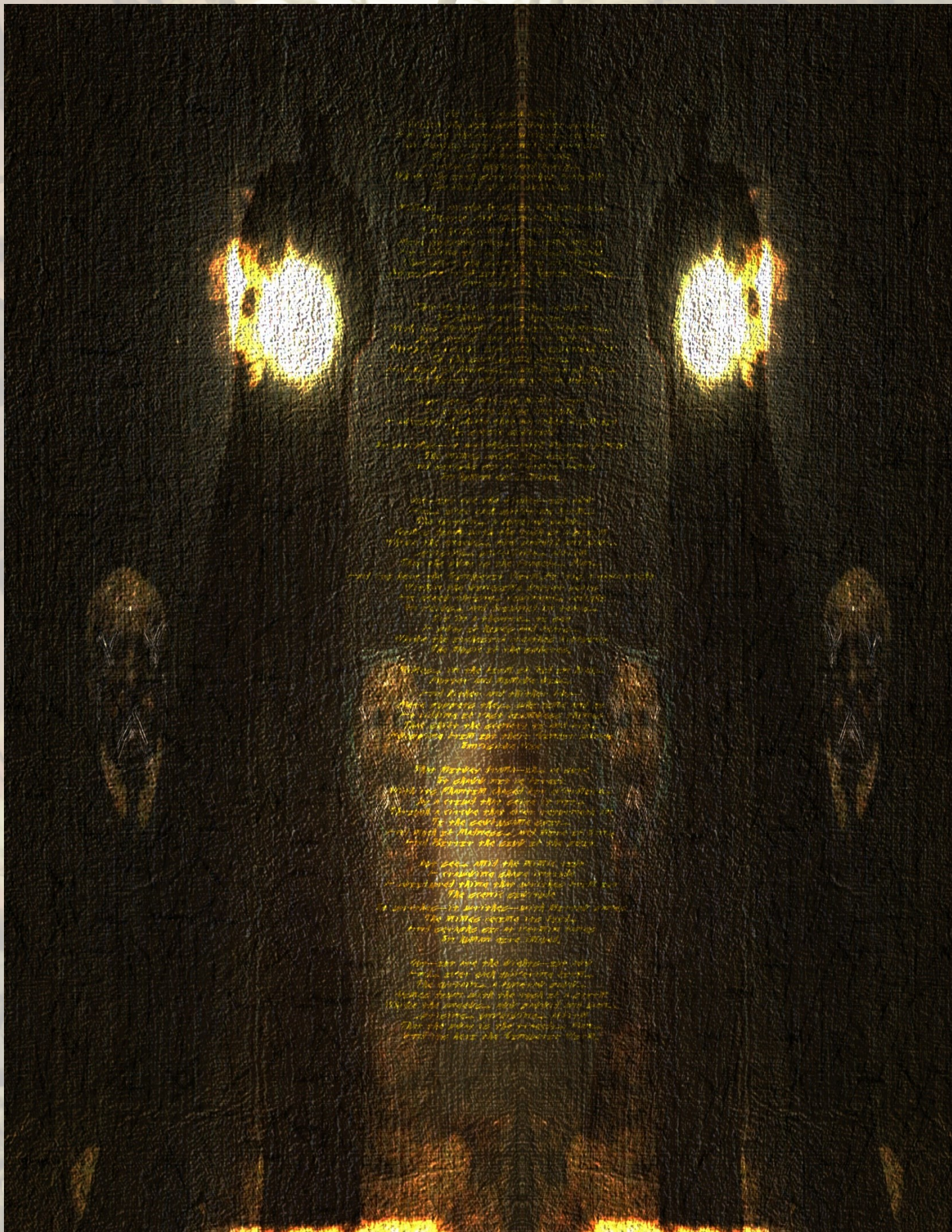
Worth noting are the modifications to Zasmus the Witch's personal modifications to the spells in the Yellow Book. By combining the curse with the magic of imbue – the Mad Witch was able to place the curses on a specific objects, for some reason mirrors in his case, so that the curse would be triggered whenever someone first looked into the mirror. Similar modifications could be applied by other wizards by increasing the casting time to Hours and limiting the types of objects that can have these curses applied to them to a single class or type of object. The levels of all the spells so modified would likewise increase by 3.

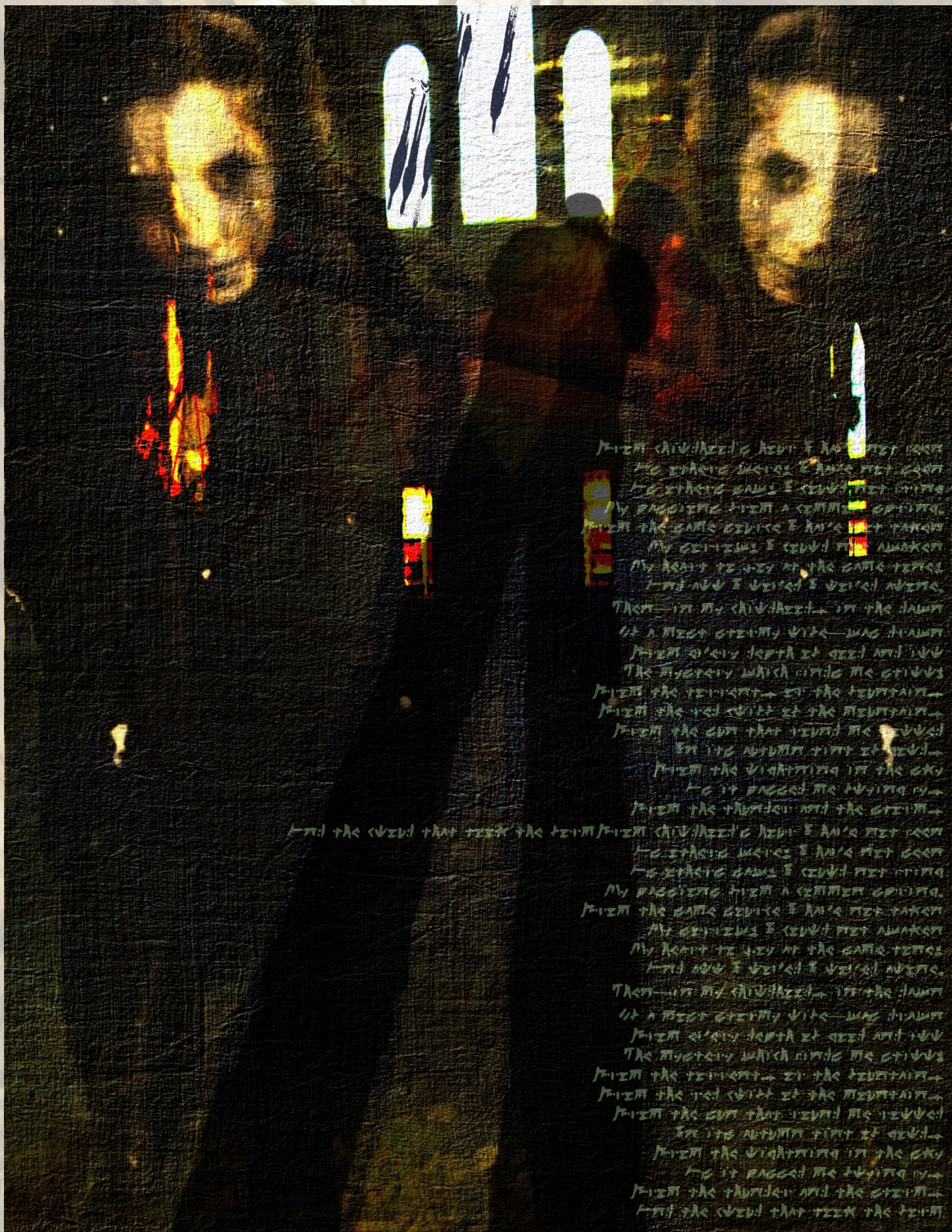
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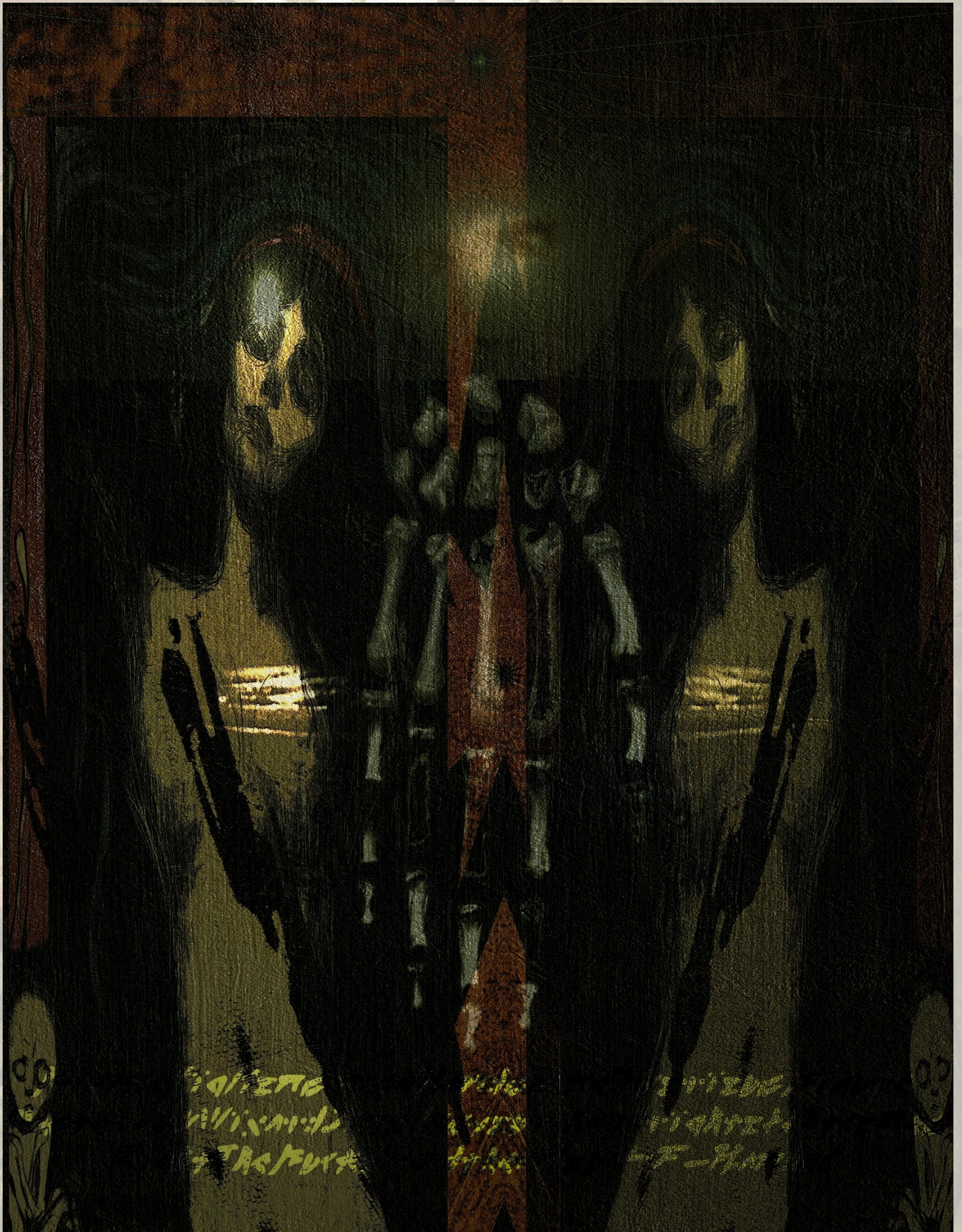






From Chivalry's heart I have not seen
No shadow more I have not seen
No shadow more I have not seen
My shadow from a shadow more
From the same heart I have not seen
My shadow from a shadow more
My heart is not of the same heart
And now I have not seen I have not seen
Then in my Chivalry in the heart
Of a heart more than was heart
From the heart of the heart and now
The shadow which is the heart
From the heart in the heart
From the heart of the heart
From the heart that heart is heart
In the heart of the heart
From the heart in the heart
As it is heart the heart is
From the heart and the heart
And the heart that heart the heart
From Chivalry's heart I have not seen
No shadow more I have not seen
No shadow more I have not seen
My shadow from a shadow more
From the same heart I have not seen
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کتابخانه ملی ایران - تهران - خیابان ولیعصر - پلاک ۱۳۳ - طبقه دوم - سالن شماره ۱۰
کتابخانه ملی ایران - تهران - خیابان ولیعصر - پلاک ۱۳۳ - طبقه دوم - سالن شماره ۱۰





Where the Roads All End

This adventure takes place at the disused port of a city by the sea. If you've got your own setting / city to work with – this adventure should occur during a time of year when the port is undergoing maintenance. The dungeon has a small footprint & can exist in most port cities. If you prefer not to devise your own setting you can use the city of **Eas** as the setting for this adventure.

Eas is a fallen city – once a great metropolis & the pre-eminent port on the continent, it has fallen into disfavor & disrepute. Now, only a shadow of its former status, the city is geographically large, but sparsely populated so that individual neighborhoods have the character of small villages. One such village stands at the docks & it includes, mainly a work-camp, a teahouse-inn & shipwrights' factory all built upon an antiquated boardwalk at the edge of a faded metropolis. The inn is called **The Merry Hare** and has as its proprietor Pennyscale – a lizard-person with some missing scales compensated by copper pennies jammed in the voids.

Player characters find themselves at the Merry Hare with essentially no prospects. The port has closed & travel from the city by sea is right out for the rest of the season. The roads lead out into the interior, but through adventure-bereft realms of bucolic farmland. The city has many options for exploration & looting – abandoned structures abound, but these are often held by desperate cultists & rival adventuring gangs. Begin the story at Pennyscale's bar.

It's the height of summer & the teahouse is barely cooler than standing out in the noonday sun. A breeze comes over the ocean & it carries the sounds of the workmens' song. They are outside dredging the port & making it navigable. One day in the next few months a ship will be able to sail into Eas port. Until then, you can only sail the barstool.

Pennyscale's look is inscrutable – the lizard pours tea & laces it with light doses of aromatic drugs. You are poured a cup. "Try your hand at some cards?" You and your fellow stranded set to deal the cards when the workmen break from their midday siesta – they're shouting in alarm & besides their alarm a woman's keening cry rises up above. "My Baby!"

Outside the inn is the boardwalk which has a pair of long piers jutting from it. These piers have been sandbagged off so that workers can enter the port & dredge the mud. They've been at this for some time. What has happened is this: While walking along the boardwalk a young mother's eldest child has fallen into the mud & startled by the crocodiles that bask there during the noonday siesta, has hidden under the boardwalk. People are looking for this kid. A good-hearted adventurer could really make a name for themselves here, rescuing a child...

I - Under the Boardwalk

The uncovered patch of mud between the piers is a maze of excavating equipment, drying mud-piles & large basking crocodiles. The crocodiles are dozing in the sunlight and none too bothered by anyone approaching, you've seen firsthand the workmen driving them off with clattering tools & shouts. The recessed area under the boardwalk is where the child seems to have retreated.

It's trivial for the Players to get into the pit, and easy enough to find the child – he's crying loudly. The crocodiles aren't a danger if they aren't provoked. If they are provoked, they can be fought & defeated in a relatively straightforward way – though there may be losses. What is interesting about this rather mundane scene is what the child has uncovered.

Underneath the boardwalk the child has dug out a hiding place & this hiding place is the entrance to a stone passage with a sealed steel door. It is marked with ancient runes which beg an expedition.

The rescue of the child can be performed with any amount of gusto & grace. If the Players refuse to offer assistance some workmen do the job themselves – gaining all the glory. They in turn report on the strange door hidden in the mud.

So – presuming the players can be badgered into looking into the strange door they will find this:

The steel is only lightly rusted which is a wonder as it's been buried under the sea for centuries, at least. The 'writing' on it's more a series of straight lines that defy easy understanding as they lengthen & shorten & twist ever so slightly under scrutiny. The door is 3 feet wide & 8 feet tall. It has a confusing wheel like mechanism at its center which seems to be the only means of operating it.

 The door is opened by twisting the wheel which requires a d20 STR check. Opening the door thereafter requires a lot of heavy pulling & intense effort which entails a d20 CON check. Once these checks are passed the door stands open & won't be easily sealed again. The writing can be deciphered by anyone who knows the Vada language, but a d20 WIS check can reveal that the writing, whether or not it is understood, does not convey an urgent warning of any kind. In Vada the door says:

Apocalypse Shelter Designate 9

The door does indeed lead to a hidden shelter meant to survive an apocalypse.

Players who don't succeed at their checks can sacrifice a pry-bar or similar tool to gain entry.